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THE PLACE OF THE EXTENSION SERVICE IN THE NEW DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE*

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Many of us have been using the phrase "new Department of Agriculture" during recent years, particularly since the development of the Mount Weather understanding and the reorganization of the Department of Agriculture in the fall of 1938. It is not a very exact phrase, but it does carry with it the idea of adjustment of the organization of the Department of Agriculture to changing conditions and problems in order that it can discharge more effectively the duties which Congress during the last decade has placed upon it.

There have been several "new Departments of Agriculture" during the last 75 years. There was a great change in the Department in the early 1900's, when Congress increased its appropriations for new work and new bureaus. There was another "new Department of Agriculture" in the year 1914 when Congress passed the Smith-Lever Act. We will continue to have "new Departments of Agriculture" as long as there is change and growth in the agriculture of the nation and in the demands which are made of Government. Contrasted with the Department of Agriculture ten years ago the present Department is not nearly as strikingly different as are the automobile models of 1939 as compared with those of 1929. New models in institutions, in their organization, and in their methods and modes of operation, are brought about by much the same forces which bring about new models in cars. These various forces attempt to keep institutions and government adjusted to changing political, economic and social conditions. The adjustments result from the demands of those who use the services of the Department, rather than from the wishes of those who render these services.

It'is easy for anyone associated with agricultural education and institutional agriculture to survey the farm life of the United States in the 1920's and to understand how natural was the evolution of the agricultural legislation of the 1930's. The action programs grew out of the soil of the 20's; they did not come out of the blue sky. We can all understand why there was so much talk about the "farm problem" which developed after the World War, why the farm problem evolved into "McNary-Haugenism," and why, with its slogan "equality for agriculture," it became a heated political issue. In much of this talk about the farm problem there was implied the idea that a responsibility rested on the Federal Government and that it was

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the function of the Federal Government to take some kind of governmental action which would bring about equality for agriculture.

The growing idea that agriculture was not receiving its fair share of the national income, that it was on the decline, made itself felt through normal democratic processes. It produced a series of laws which enlarged greatly the functions of the Department of Agriculture and the responsibilities of the Secretary of Agriculture. The A.A.A. grew out of the "equality for agriculture" idea. A rebirth of national interest in the conservation of natural resources, sharpened by real drama in the form of dust storms, floods and rural poverty, made erosion control a logical governmental service. The disastrous effects of the depression, coupled with loss of self-sufficiency and the increase in the numbers of rural people on relief, resulted in national recognition of the existence of rural poverty and concern for low-income people in agriculture. This recognition made the Farm Security Administration a perfectly natural development. By the same token, such developments as rural electrification, water facilities, crop insurance, farm forestry and other measures are natural and logical expressions of the trend of the times.

It is not necessary for me to outline here the administrative reorganization made by Secretary Wallace a little more than a year ago. Nor do I have to review at this time the philosophy behind land-use planning — a new venture in agricultural democracy and an institution which ties together the farm people of the country, the land-grant colleges in the States, and the Department of Agriculture in the national Government. To no small degree it forms the cement which will hold these three groups in just as close a union in the future as it has been in the past.

The new model of the Department of Agriculture has now been in operation a little more than a year and the developments in land use planning thus far are, I think, most gratifying to all concerned. The people in the Department are well-satisfied with the new model and the year's experience has verified the wisdom shown by the Secretary in bringing it about.

So far as the "new Department of Agriculture" is concerned, my thesis is that it came about primarily, not because of the whim of somebody in Washington, but because of the will of the people of the country, particularly of the farmers, expressed by and through Congress. It came because the people expected new and different kinds of service from the Federal Government.

Therefore, the proper approach to take in talking about the place of extension in the "new Department of Agriculture" is not through the Department itself, or through its machinery, or the blueprint of its organization. It should be approached from the standpoint of the farm families of the United States and of what they expect Government to do for them and of what all good citizens expect Government to do for the general welfare through Agriculture. For this reason, at this point I should like to leave the Washington side of the Department of Agriculture and make some

generalizations about the relation of the farm people of the United States to this changed conception of Government functions.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Agricultural Extension Service in the United States. I have read a number of the addresses given in connection with this 25th anniversary, as well as articles, publications and reports of meetings dealing with the accomplishments of extension over a quarter of a century. It is my judgment that practically all of these understate these accomplishments. Every one of them is colored with modesty.

During the past 25 years, the Agricultural Extension Service has achieved one of the greatest educational accomplishments that has ever been achieved at any time or at any place in the history of mankind.

This is a large statement. But I make it advisedly.

The accomplishment which Extension has brought about in one generation is a change in the attitude of farm people towards science in agriculture. The great mass of the farm population of this country now accept it. Twenty-five years ago, when extension work started, there was a broad fringe of people who accepted scientific agriculture. But in their attitude the great mass of farmers reflected one of two views -- skepticism or smugness. They were either skeptical or they showed a kind of entrenched egotism that made them feel it was a little beneath the dignity of a "practical" farmer to have anything to do with "theoretical farm experts." Much of the scientific agricultural thought simply did not register in the minds nor in the culture of the great mass of farmers. Some said "it was just another way of spending the taxpayers' money." If, twenty-five years ago, there had been a Gallup poll of farm opinion on a question that might have been stated -- Do you think there is anything of practical value to you and your farm in scientific agriculture? -- likely as not the great mass of working farmers in the United States would either have voted "no" or would have been neutral. I'm convinced that if such a Gallop poll were made today ninety percent of the farm people would answer "yes." In other words, in this generation, in this short space of a quarter of a century, there has been this change of attitude from skepticism and selfsatisfaction to acceptance and confidence in scientific agriculture. I know of no other accomplishment in the field of adult education anywhere that even begins to approach this change. It has great potentialities for our future. I don't believe that the extension people themselves fully realize this, because its development has been so imperceptible. It is something which has grown out of the hour by hour, day by day, and week by week conscientious, energetic work of the county and State agricultural extension workers. It has been so gradual that we can sense it only by viewing it in perspective. Behind the change, of course, is the 75 years of research and teaching in the land-grant colleges and the work of the United States Department of Agriculture.

This acceptance is broader than the mere application of science to the raising of crops and breeding and feeding of animals. It extends to many other parts of the farm and home economy. For many years I have been interested in learning what has happened to the agricultural folklore of my parents, of the parents of my generation, which is now in its fifties and sixties. My father and mother were born in Ohio, then lived in Illinois, and later moved to southwestern Iowa. Our family was a typical cornbelt family and their ideas were largely the outgrowth of the environment in which they were raised in Ohio and Illinois. Like all the other mothers of her generation, my mother was brought up on a knowledge of the home remedies of the Ohio farm homes of the 1830's and '40's and '50's. The neighbors in our community came largely from the same localities. The mothers of my classmates in the country school, like my mother, were certain that boneset tea was the proper cure for biliousness, sassafras tea in the spring tended to purify the blood, and turpentine and lard reinforced with red flannel would take care of a boy's cold in his chest and throat.

A year ago last summer I had an opportunity to talk with a classmate of mine at Ames, who later studied medicine and is now a busy country doctor in a cornbelt community. I said to him, "Sometimes I think that a doctor gets closer to the inner lives, to the science, to the folklore and the mythology of people than anyone else in these times. What is happening to those old home remedies that our mothers used to use?"

My classmate answered with the following thought-provoking statement:
"They are passing with the generation of your mother and of mine. But
they really began to pass in the 1920's. You would be surprised," he said,
"at the number of my patients, particularly those under fifty, who have
some scientific knowledge of human nutrition and feeding, and often have
remarkably up-to-date ideas on child feeding and welfare. They accept
science, when it comes to health, just as farmers accept science when it
comes to seed corn."

"This," said he, "as far as my experience in this county is concerned, came rather suddenly. It was so remarkable that I was curious to know where these ideas were coming from. I began talking to patients and to mothers, fishing for the source of this information. It didn't take me long to locate it - it was the home demonstration agent."

Then he went on and said, "I can see that the county agent in this county has had a great effect on farmers and on farming. But let me as a doctor say that you and the rest of the world don't realize the great effect that the home demonstration agent has had in injecting science into the home and household economy. As a doctor, I just don't believe that the home demonstration agent is getting 1/25th of the public recognition she deserves."

What I've said about the importance of county agents and of home demonstration agents in bringing about this change in attitude towards

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science goes for 4-H Club training as well. While on one of the traveling conferences this summer, we met with a certain county land-use committee. The committee chairman was a tanned, calloused, working farmer of about thirty-five or forty. I thought he did a wonderful job of talking about their committee problems. He demonstrated fine leadership and a democratic spirit -- so good that any outsider would notice it. After this meeting, I rode in a car with an extension worker in that State. In talking with him about the report of the county land-use planning committee, he said, "I was county agent in that county 20 years ago. That chairman was one of my club boys." These seven million youngsters who were club boys and girls of yesterday are all mixed in with the farmers of today. No one can over-estimate the effects of the clubwork in the change I am talking about.

This great change of attitude, whereby more and more and more farm people are accepting agricultural and household science and show confidence in it, is, of course, not wholly due to the Extension Service. There are many other agencies which have contributed to it. There are the public schools, the colleges of agriculture and the experiment stations, the Federal Department of Agriculture, the farm and community organizations, progressive-minded people in the community, the press, and the radio. But even when the most generous credit is given to all these agencies, the Extension Service still stands out as the agency principally responsible. Its accomplishment is the greatest piece of adult educational work ever performed.

This work has had effects which I doubt seriously were fully foreseen by those who were responsible for it in the country and by those who carried it on during these 25 years. For example, without the extension work, I don't believe it would have been possible back in 1933 to have thrown the adjustment program into high gear almost immediately. In almost every county in the United States, the farmers had come to know the county agent and extension workers. They had confidence in them. They were aware that they didn't make promises they couldn't fulfill, that they did not over-sell things. Hence, when they made their explanations of the AAA program, the extension workers immediately inspired confidence and prompted cooperation. These agents had been accustomed to organizing campaigns of various kinds within their counties. They knew of the thousand and one practical things which add up to make a workable program. There is a sentence in the Bible, which does not quite come to me, but in essence it says that events prophesied could not be fulfilled until the "fullness of time." Now, these years of patient extension work did something to people's minds and personalities which can't quite be expressed on paper. It made these early action programs possible and demonstrated that skeptics did not know what they were talking about when they said that theoretically the programs were all right but that they never could be administered. This is another great accomplishment of the Extension Service.

Thus far, I have tried to say three things. First, the "new Department of Agriculture" is a reflection of the new national situation in agriculture. It has been brought about through the desire of the

Secretary to give expression to what he believes is the wish and will of the farm people of the United States. I'm saying, let's talk about the "new Department of Agriculture" in terms of its ability to meet the needs of agriculture today. We should talk about it in terms of the needs of the six and a quarter million farm families of the country and of what they expect of Government in agriculture.

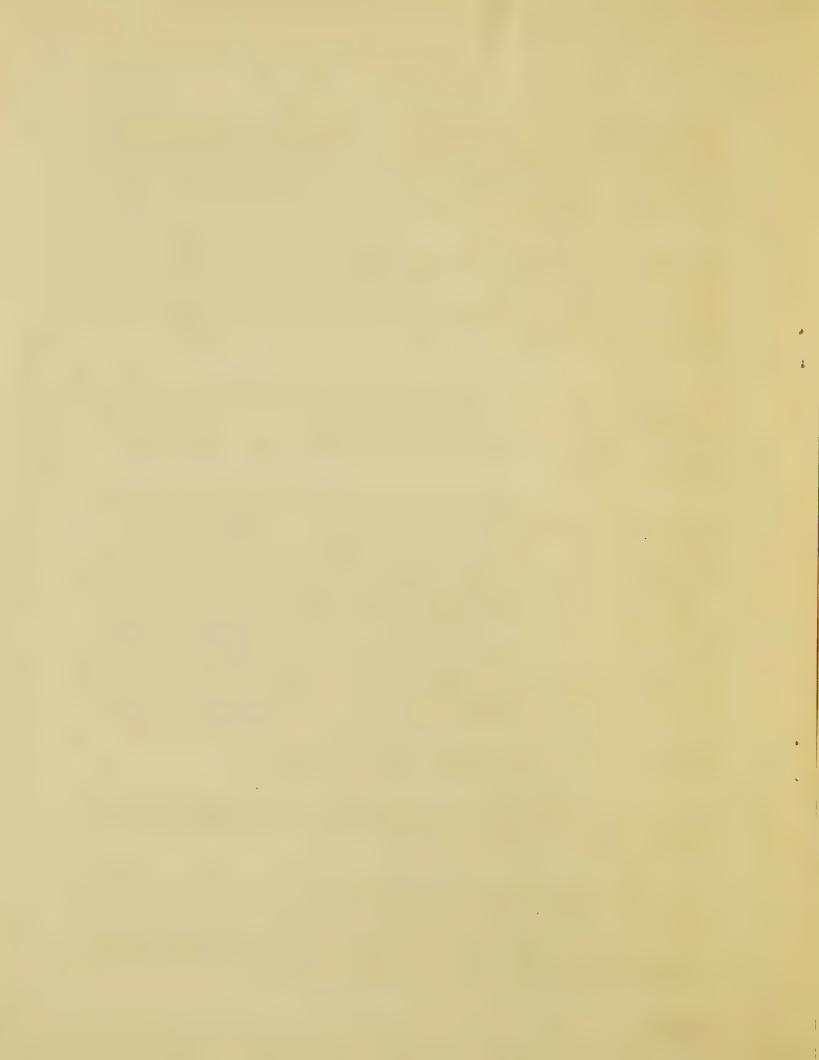
Second, the action programs and the legislation of recent years have had their roots deep down in this changing agriculture picture and in a will which has expressed itself in Congress. I believe that the action programs, all of them, are here to stay, and that the services which they render and the contacts which they make with the farm families of the country are truly in line with the individual and community thinking of farmers at this time.

Third, the Extension Service has accomplished in one generation one of the greatest pieces of adult education that has ever been accomplished in a generation. The attitude of the great mass of our farm families is that of acceptance of science and of its applications on the farm and in the household, in the rural community and in the institutions directly affecting the farmer.

So much for three fundamental observations with which I believe most extension people today would agree. Now, as I talk with extension people, ranging all the way from the county agent up to the extension director and to the college dean and president, I seem to sense a question. It might be stated thus. Now that there have been these great changes in the attitudes of farmers -- the acceptance of science on the farm and in the household--now that we have a generation of farmers who have been affected by extension activity in club work, day to day extension work, Smith-Hughes high schools, etc., and are therefore, in a sense, different from the older generation in being touched with the spark of science and education; now that we have national action programs dealing with national phases of agricultural life and in which most of the farmers are cooperating; now that we have this new condition -- does that mean that extension work has about completed its job? It did a magnificent job and did it well, but is the job done? Some are saying, by implication at least, what is the future of extension service under these new conditions?

This is a frank question. I think it is a question which is in the minds of many people in both the Federal and State Agricultural Extension Services. The rest of this paper will be devoted to giving my answer to this question.

But before I start my answer I should like to state as proposition number one something with which I think a large number of extension people will agree. No matter what the answer, extension work will not revert to what it was before 1933. That can't happen, if it is to be an expression of the will of the farm people and of the times in which we are living. That proposition carries with it absolutely no reflection on extension work



as it was before 1933. It simply says "time marches on." If we are looking for the answer to the question I have raised by looking backward or by anticipating a return to an era which is now passed, we are simply unrealistic in our thinking.

There are two possible answers to the question. One answer, the pessimistic one, assumes that the action programs in the county are detracting from the prestige and standing of the county extension workers. It implies that farmers are tending to think more and more in terms of the county A.A.A. committee, the Farm Security supervisor and Soil Conservation Districts. It also implies that the increase in Smith-Hughes work, in agricultural teaching and in the use of the radio will touch the farm youth in such a way that ultimately extension work won't be necessary. The agricultural population will be constantly replenished by young people who have been educated in agricultural science, who accept it and who know how to practice it. Since they accept it, they will keep up with it in ways other than what I call day-to-day extension activities. These pessimists conclude that extension work will sort of gradually erode away, maybe not suddenly, but slowly and surely.

A year ago last summer I was talking with a western farmer who told me with considerable pride that with the advent of the rubber-tired tractor he had completely motorized his farm. I asked him if he had sold or traded in all his horses when he got his last tractor. "No," he said, "I have an old team, about 15 years old. I raised that team, I took care of them as colts, I broke them, and they helped me probably more than anything else to become the owner of this farm. When I got my last tractor I couldn't quite bear to sell them, so I said, 'You have been good and faithful servants; I won't turn you over to somebody who might abuse you; I may get in a pinch sometime and need to work you a few days during the year, but most of my work I will do with my tractor.'"

This story, I think, illustrates the view of some of the pessimists. Apparently they fear the extension service will just be "kept around" for possible use in case of emergency.

Now, there is another view. It holds that the problems in agriculture today, even with the acceptance of science and with the great improvements that have taken place, are twice as numerous; twice as difficult and twice as big as they were a generation ago. It maintains that so far as humanity, the nation, and rural life are concerned, the stakes to be won are far more significant than those that have already been won. According to this view, an enlightened agricultural population, accepting science on the farm and in the home, will expect far more from science, from education, and from agricultural extension than they would have expected if they were living according to the pattern of ideas and ways of life of their forefathers.

I most emphatically hold the latter view. I simply cannot comprehend the pessimistic view. I can't possibly interpret what is going on in

agriculture today and conclude that the pessimists are right about the future of extension, unless I think in terms of activities which, to me at least, fail completely to express the thinking and searching and expectations of farm life in 1939. I expect the scope, the opportunities, the prestige of extension work to be increased by the new agencies and changed attitudes. I see it faced with greatly increased demands and greatly increased responsibilities.

In this connection the emergence of the idea of the unified program is very significant. The idea itself is not new. I wouldn't attempt to say who first gave voice to it. It has been discussed in extension circles many years. For want of a better term, I call it the tendency to work out complete agricultural programs. Generally speaking, extension work started with the simple procedure of teaching and demonstrating individual farm practices. Little by little extension workers and farm leaders with whom they worked in building their programs started to think about the relations of these practices to each other. Then they began searching for a way of adding them all up in order to produce a farm and home program which would be completely within the frontiers of scientific knowledge. William James once said that when a number of people under different circumstances and in different environments discovered the same thing independently, then there was something working deep down in the body politic, down in the subconscious, which should be studied and understood, for there is something which is seeking to express itself. Unified farm programming has been struggling for some time to express itself.

My point is that practically all of the action programs and, to a large degree, the present extension and planning programs are discovering that what they need is a complete program—a unified, an integrated program—for a farm, a community, a State, and for the Nation. They sense the need of a program that is consistent in all its elements, free from contradictions, duplications and over—lappings. This has been a central theme in the discussions of the Land-Grant College and Federal Department Committees on Federal—States relations. Let me give you some illustrations of what I mean by this unified farm program.

The A.A.A. started in 1933 to base its allotments on historic yields. It realized that this would work unequally, but since the time was short and allotments had to be made, this seemed to be the best way to do it. It was not long until many farms of the country had two, or sometimes three, independent A.A.A. programs. There were the wheat program and the corn-hog program, and the two didn't quite synchronize. The farmer said, "This doesn't make sense. Why can't we have a single A.A.A. program for a single farm?" Then a study was made to determine what the goals in national agricultural production should be, when production was related to reasonable estimates as to demand and reasonable assumptions as to soil conservation. Implied in this was the idea that if the goals could be well understood and conservation well understood, then a single A.A.A. program could be worked out which would make sense on an individual farm. Then, following the Hoosac Mills decision, the concepts of "soil depleting" and "soil conserving" crops were established and A.A.A. procedures began to provide

for maps of farms. Every A.A.A. cooperator, many of them for the first time, got an accurate map of his farm. The procedure didn't stop there. In many cases, the soils in the different fields were appraised and graded according to their productivity and their susceptibility to erosion.

Back in 1933 there was no super-planner who surveyed this whole field and said, "In 1939 the A.A.A. is going to operate on the basis of an approach which considers the farm as a unit and which tries to use the powers of the A.A.A. to have that farm operate so as to adjust itself to the national goals of production, to the concepts of conservation, and to scientific practices and scientific farm management." Yet that is the direction in which the A.A.A. has steadily been moving. In doing so it has done a lot to stimulate farm management, and its progress with reference to practices has brought about an application of science to many farms which I don't think would have come about otherwise for many, many years.

When I first learned of the Soil Conservation Service, it was thinking mostly in terms of building terraces and of filling up gulleys. But as it got into the problem of controlling erosion it moved step by step from gulleys and terraces to rotation; then to planting trees on the slopes which were too steep or were ill-adapted for grass or crops. Little by little, like the A.A.A. without any master planner, it arrived at a position and, I think, a logical position, that maintained that soil erosion on a farm could not be controlled except through a complete farm program which took into consideration the crops, the soil and the whole farm economy. And soil erosion control couldn't stop there, because the farmer and his family are a part of the farm economy, and the idea had to go on into social, economic and governmental relationships. All this happened while the Soil Conservation Service was moving in the direction of a unified erosion control program.

The Farm Security Administration first began by making grants and administering relief to poverty- and drought-stricken farmers. necessary but it was hardly constructive. It was just keeping people alive. To do something having permanent value it embarked on a rehabilitation loan program. Two things are involved in rehabilitation. One is the development of the character and personality of the client and of his family. The other was putting the loan on as sound and economic a foundation as possible, so that the client could step up the ladder to better things and could thus repay his loan. Again without any master planner, Farm Security developed, largely through the trial and error method, a management program for the farm occupied by each individual rehabilitation client. This was worked out for each particular farm. It was a practical and a complete program so far as the man and his situation were concerned. And it did not stop with the farm. It went into the household and, as a part of the personality building part of rehabilitation, the household plan and budget were developed. Provision was made for the health of the family. What we have here is this same discovery -- a unified farm program, realistic and adjusted to the prevailing conditions for every Farm Security rehabilitation cooperator.



I think I could go around the circle and show that the type of thinking which I have described has been emerging in practically all the national agricultural activities. The Forest Service was asked to work out a plan for rehabilitation of cut-over forest lands, where the inhabitants had been left stranded because the timber was cut on a "cut-out and get-out" basis. They developed a program for sustained yield. But people are related to a program of sustained yield. In working out this program the Forest Service can't stop short of making plans for harvesting and processing the timber crop, hence for the stability and pattern of life of the workers and their families, who will be given steady employment under the sustained yield plan.

The Farm Credit Administration started out as cooperative bankers, making farm loans. But they, too, have discovered this idea of a unified program for a farm. They feel that their loan is just a part of a pattern in modern agriculture, that it can't be regarded just as a borrowing and lending matter. The loan should be predicated upon the proper method of land use and of farm management in the area in which it is made. Consequently, Farm Credit people are thinking in terms of a farm management plan, a farm program, so to speak, particularly for those farms which get their cooperative credit through the land bank system but are not getting along very well.

Talk with the administrative people of each of the Federal agricultural programs and you will find that deep down in their thinking they are all planning how to relate their program properly to the other programs and thereby get a unified approach to the farm problem. I have cited illustrations from the action programs of the Department simply because I am familiar with some of the thinking which goes on in Washington in this connection.

I think practically every extension director here could get up and testify that this is exactly the idea that the extension workers in his State are thinking most about. I was down in Texas this past summer. Mr. Shelton, Assistant Extension Director, said, "I want to show you a couple of farms this afternoon which illustrate the program that we are trying to work out in Texas." "What is the program?", I said, He replied, "It is a unified program that tries to bring in and relate all of the farm and home practices recommended by the Extension Service for a particular farm and a particular farm family."

Almost any situation in society may appear very confused, very disorganized and unrelated on the surface. Yet if we can really see deeply enough and search hard enough, we can usually find something in the situation which amounts to a unifying principle. I believe that in our present situation there is a tremendously important unifying principle in this phenomenon that farmers and people in all branches of agriculture are seeking this unified farm program. It is a part of the clue to this great future for extension work.

The planning function is another new function which the new situation has produced. It is not necessary for me to elaborate in detail the scope and potentialities of the county land use planning project and the place of the new Bureau of Agricultural Economics in the "new Department of Agriculture," the land-use planning project in the county, and the State land-use planning committee in the State. I am sure that this setup is fair and that it is properly organized. It is fully cooperative and provides a truly unifying procedure amongst the farmers, the land-grant colleges, the State Extension Service, the action agencies, and the whole Department of Agriculture. I think I can see in this democratic procedure the process which will lead towards a true unification of all these programs and which will bring about the cooperation and coordination which results from growth and understanding. If this can be done, extension can work through and can reflect itself in this new technique so as to reach most of the farms within the State and within the county. The impetus and momentum of the Federal programs can be harnessed in such a way as to take this unified program in a vivid way to every farm.

We frequently speak of farming as a way of life. Of course, we mean it in a particular sense. There are many different ways of farm life right now. Social evolution may produce ways of farm life in the future which will be different from and better than any that we have now. Conceivably they can be much more cooperative, or much more competitive, or much more mechanized, specialized and commercialized than they are today. The ways of life and the patterns of culture of farm families have been and are changing just as rapidly as the world keeps changing.

This tendency to consider the life of any group or community of people as a whole is very basic in the new, integrated approach of the social sciences. This approach holds that the way farmers make their living, the kind of education which they believe in and support, the way they spend their recreation and leisure time, their attitudes on religion, their relations with other people, both in and outside of their community, are all inter-related. They are like a machine with many sets of cog wheels all meshing together. If you change one of these, then you change the whole machine. This changed attitude towards science is part of a changing set of attitudes of many farmers towards a great many things in life. With farmers showing greater receptivity to changes effected by science and with the whole farm plan emphasizing the non-material aspects of farm life, the opportunity is present, it seems to me, for extension work to move into a whole new field of activity.

The most intelligent, most democratic way to give direction to social change is by and through education—the kind of education which we believe in in America, which grows out of the basic democratic doctrines of our country. I believe that when we view civilization broadly and look beyond next year or the year after, we will conclude that the function of education is far more important than the function of administration. In the world right now I think it is even more important than research. It is the education that is going on now which will largely control the affairs of men tomorrow and of the day after tomorrow.

The leading thinkers in education today are raising the question, education for what? Last year, the National Educational Policies Commission made a series of studies designed to answer this question. Their answer was, education for democracy.

The kind of extension work which expresses the aims and objectives of the "new Department of Agriculture" is an education which seeks to move agricultural civilization down the democratic highway.

I remember attending a meeting of the Extension Division of this Association about 20 years ago where the subject under discussion was, "What are the functions of the County Extension Agent?" One man argued that he was primarily a teacher. Another said he was an administrator, an organizer of rural affairs. Still another, I remember, used the phrase that he was pretty largely the hired man of the farmers in the county—to do for them the things which they, through their organization, wanted done. The discussion closed by someone saying that we might have some agreement on what the duties of a county agent should be but there was no telling what this would grow into.

The manifold duties of the extension agent have resulted in this triumph for extension work which I have described above. The stage is set for even greater triumphs in the future. Most modern theories of education emphasize participation and experience. Education results in growth. The individual benefits from educational activities largely in proportion to the extent of his participation in them. From the standpoint of the new Department of Agriculture, the national agricultural programs and their accompanying activities furnish one of the things which the extension work can support and service with educational activities. The Extension Service can capitalize upon the participation of the individual farm and the farm community in these programs. And this is only one aspect, as I see it, of extension work in the future. Other new aspects of this complete extension program should and must have their origins in the State, in the county and in the local community.

Rural civilization in America today needs more and better extension work than it has ever had in the past.